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ABSTRACT

When examining basic leadership models, the traits of one of the most important leaders in society, the mother, are rarely considered. This paper reflects on models of leadership found in textbooks and feminist literature and conjures a model, inclusive of popularly held beliefs, of the role of mothers in family and society. The paper asks whether mothers are seen as leaders, noting that in ancient Chinese literature it is stated that (paraphrasing) if the earth's mothers negotiated peace treaties there would be no more wars. It also asks if maternalism makes sense in the rearing of new citizens, why does it not make sense for municipalities or the world? The paper addresses salient examples of feminist leadership that inform maternalism and offers a multi-faceted approach to problem solving in the wake of an ineffective paternalistic world view. The review of the literature reveals five agendas of inquiry regarding maternal leadership: mystical powers of mothers; women in power; critical (maternal) literacy in the workplace; maternal leading and radical feminism; and maternal leadership, the road to praxis. The paper concludes that maternal leading is a complex form of leadership that uses powerful tools and embraces an emphatic approach to leading, with an emphasis on love, caring for others, and a positive focus. (Contains 13 references.) (Author/BT)

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Mother's Leading: Models of Maternalism.

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Abstract

When looking at basic leadership models, I rarely find any information concerning the leadership traits of one of the most important leaders in our society, the mother. I reflected on several models of leadership found in both textbooks and feminist literature and attempted to conjure a model inclusive of popularly held beliefs regarding the role of mothers in family and society. Are mothers seen as leaders? In the ancient Chinese literature it is stated that, paraphrasing, if the Earth's mothers negotiated peace treaties there would be no more wars. If maternalism makes sense in the rearing of new citizens, why not municipalities or better yet the world? I have chosen to address salient examples of feminist leadership that inform maternalism and give it a multi-faceted approach to problem solving in the wake of an ineffective paternalistic worldview. The review of literature reveals five agendas of inquiry regarding maternal leadership: Mystical Powers of Mothers, Women in Power, Critical (Maternal) Literacy in the Workplace, Maternal Leading and Radical Feminism, and Maternal Leadership: The Road to Praxis. I conclude that maternal leading is a complex form of leadership that utilizes powerful tools and embraces an empathic approach to leading, with an emphasis on love, caring for others and a positive focus.

Introduction

When looking at basic leadership models, I rarely find any information concerning the leadership traits of one of the most important leaders in our society, the mother. I reflected on several models of leadership found in both textbooks and feminist literature and attempted to conjure a model inclusive of popularly held beliefs regarding the role of mothers in family and society.

The Problem

Are mothers seen as leaders? In the ancient Chinese literature it is stated that, paraphrasing, if mothers negotiated peace treaties there would be no more wars. If maternalism makes sense in the rearing of new citizens, why not municipalities or better yet the world? I have chosen to address salient examples of feminist leadership that inform maternalism and give it a multi-faceted approach to problem solving in the wake of an ineffective paternalistic worldview.

Review of the Literature

Mystical Powers of Mothers

Pao Saykao (2001) talks of leadership and the philosophical and mystical aspects of maternal leaders in the Hmong community living in Australia. The mystical aspects are pronounced in his family because he is a member of the Thao clan and the sub clan "Hmoob Thoj Caiv Hluav Taws, a clan in which all the new mothers cannot touch any fire or electricity for a period of 5 to 7 days after the birth of a new baby" (p. 1). In Hmong society, the mother is held in awe due to the mystical nature of motherhood and the mother's ability (roughly interpreted) to "lead simultaneously as she follows" (p. 1).

In the Hmong society, Saykao notes "...the leader is responsible for the conduct of his members: for example, when a member is in trouble, the leader steps in and accepts responsibility for solving the problem. The leader may also face any consequences from the members actions, and this consequence becomes a life time record for that family" (p. 1).

Leadership qualities appeared to transcend gender, and while there is no stereotype of a typical Hmong leader, the Hmong describe their leaders having these qualities:

> Noj tau, hais tau - He does as he says and says as he does; be accountable; lead by example;
> Siab loj, siab dav - Kind and considerate.
> Coj lus taug - Controlled and diplomatic in what he says.
> Coj ncaj - Justice and fair play in all dealings.
> Nyiam kwv tij neej ntsa, nyiam phooj nyiam ywg - Be sociable and mix well with all.
> Paub kev cai - Know the rules/customs/norms; etc. (Saykao, 2001, p.1)

I found the leadership traits, outside of the predominately male gender bias in the narrative, to be neutral. In the Hmong society, the male appears to be the dominant figure "...at least in most public gathering but this does not automatically mean that the husband is the leader of the house and in many cases, the wife may be the leader" (Saykao, 2001, p. 1). Saykao notes that this phenomenon is not a paroxysm but is found in his own family and in the Hmong community in Australia, in part due to the gender equity seen in the actions resulting from the leadership qualities and the mysticism that females enjoy in this society.

Maternal Training

A colloquialism appropriately states that infants do not arrive with operator's manuals or a book of instructions. Much of what women know about leading the infant on its journey into life is learned from their mothers, peers or from the mothers own experience in life. Is there a role for formal training that is formative in the role of a young mother?

In a paper by Harriett Kleinman (1977), the author describes a program designed to enhance new mothers' self-confidence in their maternal role as a means of promoting optimal mother-infant interaction during the infant's first six months. Ten middle-class mothers and their healthy first-born infants were involved in an 8-week educational program which provided psychological support and information to the mothers. Information included in the curriculum related to essentials of infant care as well as maternal wellness post-partum instruction, support systems for the new mothers, fellowship and sharing opportunities, resources and options for maternal and child health care.

What emerged in this study were the changes in the mother's feelings about herself as a person and a woman, an important component of her enjoyment of the baby, self-confidence as a parent and her self-identity in regards to the maternal role. Self-evaluated changes in the trained mothers' feelings were compared with changes in the feelings of untrained mothers in two control groups. New mothers who had attended the training had increased confidence in their maternal roles that was bolstered by the support systems and the communications with instructors, and implicitly, the communications with others who were undergoing and coping with similar situations. Kleinman encourages future research and tentatively concluded that this parent-support approach is effective in increasing the self-confidence of new mothers.

This concept was recently replicated in our region. In a similar study in Sullivan County, Tennessee, an active and knowledgeable maternal presence in the home was felt to be critical in the success of any well-child program, up to and including nutrition, growth and health, success at school and the child's ability to thrive both in their milieu and in the community (Sullivan County Regional Health Department, 2000).

Women in Power

In the book Women in Power: The Secrets of Leadership, Dorothy W. Cantor and Toni Bernay (1991) interviewed 25 prominent female elected officials in an attempt to analyze what life experiences enabled women leaders to succeed. Leaders like Texas Governor Ann Richards, Colorado Representative Pat Schroeder, and Maryland Senator Barbara Mikulsky, and the interviews discuss the reasons why these women leaders sought a leadership role, how they were successful, what obstacles did they overcome to achieve their positions and what roadblocks remain in their career path. The book review gave a summary formula for success:

> Competent Self (feeling of self- confidence) + Creative Aggression (ability to speak out and take initiative) + WomanPower (the determination and ability to make the world a better place) = Leadership (Publishers Weekly Book Review, 2001).

Strong mothers, admiring fathers, a supportive spouse and, often, all-female higher education seem to help encourage such qualities in women. The study finds that women work harder than men to get to the top, and that women in power often overcome the absence of the male leadership attributes such as wealth and family connections. The foreword by ex-San Francisco mayor, present California Senator Diane Feinstein (author of Never Let Them See You Cry) and the afterword by the first female Vice-Presidential candidate Geraldine Ferraro both offer readers more insight into what makes a female leader. Women in Power takes a close look at the new cadre of women in high elected office today who have redefined the model of leadership in American politics; the book explains how daughters become leaders (Publishers Weekly Book Review, 1992).

Critical (Maternal) Literacy in the Workplace

Gwen Hull (1993) studied the dysfunctional relationship between an education program (Gateway College) that taught, ostensibly, banking and finance courses and prepared students for

banking careers. Hull approached this study from a naturalistic paradigm and critically reviewed all facets of the program, beginning with the literacy and basic skill requirements for the program and the context of the historical academic achievement and language problems of the students in the program. In viewing the nature of reality in this study, Hull views all facets of the program through multiple lenses, and considers the wholism of the program and the social forces that create and sustain it. The purpose of the study was to analyze the congruence of the aspirations of the subjects participating in this study against what is really available to them in the workplace. Hull also skillfully interviews the single faculty member in Banking and Finance, Mr. Parker, and the members of the community-of-need advisory board from the local banks.

The author is able to abstract the research in a single paragraph: "I have tried to demonstrate, for this short term vocational program in banking and finance and for the job of proofing, that the current popular rhetoric that attempts to blame economic difficulties on unskilled labor and then attempts to remedy the problem with literacy programs and ever-proliferating sets of workbooks and computer-aided instruction on basic skills simply misses the mark. People (in this study) entered a training program that emphasized skills that would not be used on the job, were given an employment test that had questionable relevance to work, were hired despite doing poorly on the employment test and interview, and lost their jobs even when they were competent at doing the work" (Hull, 1993, p. 388). That is, graduates of this banking program received jobs as proof operators and clerks, and with few exceptions, were terminated early in the course of their employment.

Hull notes the special causes that create the need for proof operators, and is gracious to the faculty member, Mr. Parker, whose oft-stated premise for the Banking and Finance program is that "something is better than nothing" and that jobs as proof operators and bank tellers

"...was a positive alternative to poverty, welfare, and bad intentioned men" (p. 379). Hull's interviews with bank managers, advisors, students and her own admittedly biased observations cited a lack of preparation in basic literacy skills, dependency on public transportation, child care problems, tough attendance and work policies, and minimal wages: all set the students up for failure. All of these variables were well known to the advisory committee members, and paradoxically, the named variables (and unnamed variables) create the attrition this keeps the Banking and Finance program open and, interestingly, further secure the stability of Mr. Parker's appointment.

The interviews with bank managers, advisors, students and the observations of the Hull cite the lack of preparation in basic literacy skills, dependency on public transportation, child care problems, tough attendance and work policies, and minimal wages: all set the students up for failure. All of these variables were well known to the participants, and paradoxically, this creates the need for the Banking and Finance program and for Mr. Parker's position. Mrs. Bork, the trainer of the proof operators at the Bank of the Pacific, relates bank policy to the potential success of the proof operators: "...If you don't have transportation, forget it", and " You'll get 15 hours per week...(on their work schedule)", and citing the policy on errors, with the average proof operator doing 3000-5000 pieces per hour, "...three mistakes in a month and they lose one-third of their incentive pay." (p.382). These working conditions seemed sufficient to cause heavy turnover in a proof center, which in turn requires constant training of employees. The most telling comment from Mrs. Bork: "There's always going to be heavy turnover...in this large of an office. Besides, if there was no turnover it would make me unemployed" (p. 383).

It is specifically on this point that Hull draws from the literature on critical literacy, questioning the wisdom of linking education to marketplace imperatives, looking instead for a

moral and civic rationale for schooling. She cites Giroux and McLaren (1989), activists who demand an educational enterprise that "...aims at developing critical citizens and reconstructing community life by extending the principles of social justice to all spheres of economic, political, and cultural life...learning for empowerment, whereby education draws upon the diversity of resources that students bring to school, rather than promoting an uncritical adoption of values consistent with industrial discipline and social conformity" (pp. 17-18)

I have frequently cited this paper because I believed it is an excellent case study of an education program that ostensibly offered hope to the hopeless; however, my perspective on the program has changed. The author believes that education and the infrastructure of the program should be value-bound to all parties. This makes the negative impact on mothers and persons of color (and the lack of values in this regions banking industry) more apparent. I was most impressed that the writer viewed issues through a social responsibility lens, while persisting with the theme that this program oppresses women and people of color by its purposeful narrowing of the potential jobs available and the "virtual guarantee" of attrition. The author, while attending an advisory committee meeting, listens as Mr. Parker and the advisory board threaten to pull community support from the program if basic skills training and courses titled "Bank Management " and "Principles of Bank Operations" are added to the curriculum by the Gateway College administration. The intent was to improve transfer credit to the state university system, however Mrs. Lavelle, a human resources manager serving on the advisory committee, claimed not to care if the students knew the principles of bank operation, and stated "Students who are interested in bank management aren't the kind of people we want as proof operators and tellers" (p. 380).

The intent of this paper was to evaluate the effectiveness of Hull's arguments from a feminist perspective. The single most impressive comment I can make was that Hull completely immersed herself in this study, actually training for the proof-operator jobs, sitting for entrance examinations at local banks, and then working as a proof operator for a short period. Hull recognizes the limitations of the experience, but her dedication to the subject was impressive and gave her not only a feminist perspective but a unique experience-based feminist perspective.

Interestingly, Lopez and Mertens (1993) believe classes on research in higher education institutions rarely include feminine epistemology or feminist approaches to research; in other words, the lack of emphasis on feminist pedagogy will hamper future feminist research. Hull remains objective throughout the paper, and her opinion can be clearly viewed by the reader through the lens of feminist social responsibility, inclusive of a plan to improve the program. Hull's approach is reminiscent of Palmieri's (1995) description of "symmetrical womanhood" (p. 16) at Wellesley College in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. This concept emphasized a balance of traditional roles and intellectual and community development during the Wellesley College's involvement with the women's suffrage movement. Hull never lets the reader forget the target of the oppression, and the proposed role and definition of emancipatory education. This paper balances the uniquely feminine problems existing today with the important concept that a hasty response to the problem of unemployment (such as the Banking and Finance course) become a part of the problem.

Maternal Leading and Radical Feminism

In "Mad Cow" Disease and the Animal Industrial Complex, Carol Adams defines the term ecofeminism as a position based upon the following claims:

1. There are important connections between the oppression of women and the oppression of nature;

2. Understanding the nature of these connections is necessary to any adequate understanding of the oppression of women and the oppression of nature;
3. Feminist theory and practice must include an ecological perspective, and;
4. Solutions to ecological problems must include a feminist perspective.

(cited in Warren,1987)

Adams overtly analyzes the linkage of bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) and Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease (CJD) with meat-eating behaviors. To avoid the reduction of Warren's definition of ecofeminism to merely a taxonomy (Coughie, 1995), Adams states that the meat industry and consumers attempted to fix an anthropocentric problem with an anthropocentric answer: that is, improve the meat supply rather than examine the practice of meat-eating. She then examines the meat-eating crisis through ecofeminist analysis, which resists such anthropocentricity. From an ecofeminist perspective, the meat-eating crisis represents a small piece of the larger animal-industrial complex and it's production practices and attitudes. Adam's believes that the patriarchal worldview upholds the cow's deontologized status, and that butchery and meat-eating continues in spite of the potential for the above listed deadly diseases. The female of the species lives longer than the beef steer only to be exploited for her labor and milk-production: This is the reason BSE is primarily a female disease, given the name "Mad Cow disease".

The animal industrial complex seeks feminized protein through exploitation of the cows reproductive labor, and Adams sees the relationship between exploitation of any feminine mammals as related: While for the male home and work are separate, and for the female work is in the home as well, animal "workers" cannot "go home" at all. The modern animal industry does not allow them to "go home" - they are exploited 24 hours a day. In the case of animals, the "home" itself has been brought under factory control...indeed it is often the sphere of

reproduction (mating, breeding, the laying of eggs) which the capitalist seeks to exploit (Noske, 1989).

Adams connects the devaluation of women to cows in western culture through the work of anthropologist John Haverson's (1976) words describing the disparate use of "cow ...as thoroughly derogatory. The dairy cow, kept perpetually pregnant or lactating, with swollen belly and swollen udder, the dairy cow is seen as fat. Confined to a stall, denied the active role of nurturing and protecting a calf - so that milking is something done *to* her rather than *by* her - she is seen as passive and dull. The cow then becomes emblematic of these traits, which metaphor can attach to women" (Haverson, cited in Dunayer, 1995, p.13).

Adams then utilizes Warren's four minimal claims of ecofeminism as a response to a patriarchal conceptual framework, representing "...a logic of domination that explains, justifies, and maintains not only the subordination of everything in nature", inclusive of women (Warren, 1987, p. 127). Individual acts are encouraged because the patriarchal worldview lodges itself in each individual consumer. Adams offers that along with action, women must reconceptualize themselves and their relations to the non-human natural world in non-patriarchal ways. In this way ecofeminists can " recover ontology as the ground for ethics by resisting and disputing the logic of domination" (p. 44), and suggests veganism as a model for enacting ecofeminist consciousness.

Carol Adams is a passionate defender of all creatures, using powerful prose and real-life examples of the animal industrial complex in defending "...the terminal animal's right-to-life while calling for a boycott of the feminized protein and meat-production industry because of it's exploitation of female animals and adherence to a patriarchal worldview" (p. 44).

This work directly connect to adult education and the author seeks to raise the consciousness of the reader and serve as a guidebook to life for women. To the reader who believes that Adams is an extremist or reactionary, consider the reentering woman's experience in secondary or higher education.

Until recently, little attention was given in the literature to physical, psychological, and familial barriers related to women's success or failure in education. These barriers can appear monumental to reentering women and typically are related to aspects of feminine sex role socialization (Rice and Meyer, 1989). Because women are socialized to bear primary responsibility for family responsibilities and child rearing, a return to school often creates significant role strain and feelings of guilt, inadequacy, and self-blame over difficulties in handling multiple roles (Patterson and Blank, 1985). Fine (1985) suggested societal inequities as well as institutional barriers contribute to the so-called purging of students from schools, whether by coercion or by choice. Reentering women with lower incomes report more difficulties in meeting child care and family responsibilities (Smallwood, 1980) and more symptoms of stress, including depression, anxiety, and compulsivity (Sands & Richardson, 1984). If women who are reentering college are first prepared for the inevitable problems they will face in continuing their education, would they be better informed and prepared to utilize the resources at their disposal before they quit? Would a seminar on the concept of ecofeminism heighten their awareness of the presence of a patriarchal worldview and leave them forewarned *and* foreamed?

Is Maternal Leadership The Road to Praxis?

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Praxis is a Greek word that stands for action and reflection. The achievement of praxis signifies the organism's realization that it's action has changed it's environment; the organism then reflects on it's action, and follows-up with further action (Vella, 1990). The popular education literature states that praxis can be achieved through lifelong learning experiences, particularly those that enhance the understanding and use of critical literacy.

Critical literacy encourages self-directed learning, with an emphasis on decoding and assessing lessons and texts. This allows learners to read their world (Freire, 1972) in an attempt to understand the relations of power and domination that underlie, inform, and create them, and ultimately, to change them (Lankshear and McLaren, 1993). Langstaat (1994) suggested that writing and composing a cultural critique was historically a "feminized field", and Forcey (1993) states that "...the (maternalist) feminist argues from a more informed and diverse approach than the androcentrist, and that feminism better tolerates ambiguity, tension, and theoretical untidiness" (p. 21).

Carter (1995) proposes that the telling of stories of individual, personal, and feminine experiences in the classroom serve as a framework to help organize personal understandings of their educational experience. Students and teachers use well-remembered events to build a dialogic bridge between personal experience and the world of classrooms and educational knowledge (p.326). A reading and discussion of the Bank and Finance course of study, and Mr. Parker's espoused theories versus his theories-in-use (Anderson, 1997) would serve as a *caveat emptor* (my emphasis) for women students who are reentering college, particularly if the study was presented in a problem-posing format with dialogue and reflection. I believe that men and women in education must be open-minded and listen to what authors such as Hull and Adams are saying. We must then examine our own teaching practices and institutions to see if we validate

these theories, and ask ourselves "Are we the emancipators or oppressors and what can we do about it? " If we frame ourselves in the role of oppressor and formulate a positive response and act as a change agent, we have successfully participated in critical literacy in our own lives while improving the lives of our students and colleagues.

Discussion

The review of the literature reveals five agendas of inquiry regarding maternal leadership: Mystical Powers of Mothers, Women in Power, Critical (Maternal) Literacy in the Workplace, Maternal Leading and Radical Feminism, and Maternal Leadership: The Road to Praxis. To understand maternalism, we must better understand the foundations of this philosophy: strength through caring for people, emphasis on love and a positive vision of the future, regardless of the situation. The beauty of this model is its endurance and indefatigability even prior to the recorded history of mankind. The eclecticism of this way of leading makes it useful in many situations and its constructs (strength, caring, love, vision) will stand the test of time.

Conclusion

I conclude that maternal leading is a complex form of leadership that utilizes powerful tools and embraces an empathic approach to leading, with an emphasis on love, caring for others and a positive focus.

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